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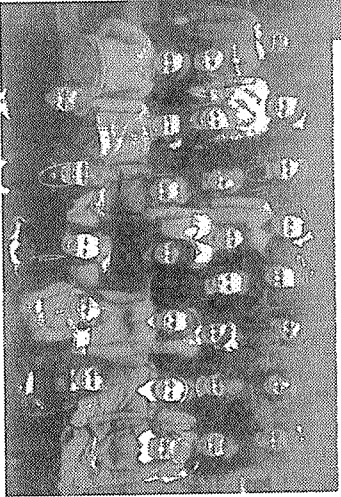
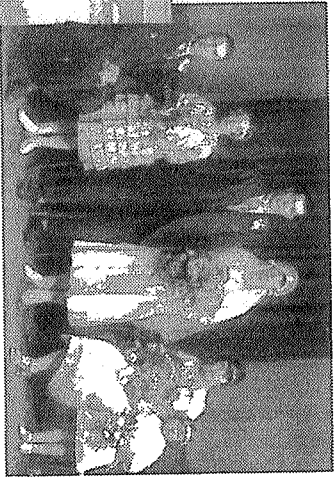
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# A PEOPLE'S HISTORY



# OF COATBRIDGE

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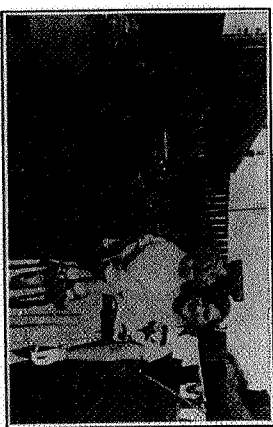
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**Montlands Carers Respite Group (Coalbridge Branch)**

*From left to right : Margaret McIlroy, Mary Meechan, Nancy Scanlon, Jessie Millar, John Kennedy, Arthur Gardner, Lesley Harkins, Margaret Russell, Cathy Fennessey, May Kane.*

## INTRODUCTION



The Monklands Carers Respite Group (Coatbridge Branch) meets at Townhead Parish Church. During 1993 an oral reminiscence project was conducted in conjunction with the Workers Educational Association: these are some of its results. The members are all pensioners who live in

the Coatbridge area. Some have been here all their lives, others are incomers. The Coatbridge area has seen a great many changes this century, and we hope this booklet will allow a new appreciation of the people's history.

### *The group members are:*

Margaret Biggart, born 1933

Born in Whifflet, and has worked in Alexander and

Coathill Hospitals, Coatbridge

Cathy Fenessey, born 1930

Cathy is from Coatbridge, and worked in various jobs, including a foundry and bakery. Her husband was a long distance lorry driver.

Mary Haughian, born 1914

Born in Coatbridge, and worked in Woolworths and Social Security. Her husband was a baker.

Mary Kane, born 1927

Has lived mainly in Coatbridge apart from ten years working in Glasgow, worked as a machinist.

Esther McAloon, born 1924

From Muirkirk, Ayrshire. Worked as a nurse, latterly in Monkland Hospital. Her husband worked in Gartsherrie Steelworks.

*Margaret McIlroy & daughter: taken in Miller St. c.1956. The car at the left belonged to the family.*

Margaret McIlroy, born 1920  
Born in Airdrie. Jobs have included working in a boarding house in Rothesay. Married to a miner.

Jessie McMillan, born 1915

Born in Larkhall, Jessie lived in Douglas. She worked in Warnocks, and Dobies and Gills. Her husband was a miner.

Mary Meechan, born 1912

has lived mainly in Glenboig. Has worked as a housekeeper and for five years in America. Her husband was a clay pit worker.

Margaret Russell, born 1933

born in Coatbridge, and has lived in New Zealand and Australia. Has worked as a machinist. Her husband worked in Stuarts and Lloyds.

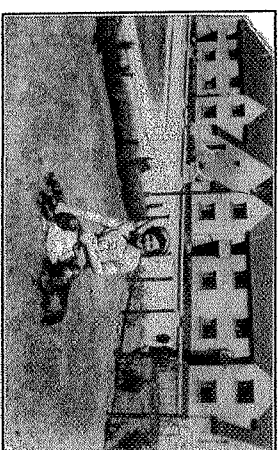
Nancy Scanlon, born 1913

Born in Glenboig, and has lived there for most of her life. Her husband worked in Coats Ironworks.

Robert Speirs, born 1910

Born in Coatbridge. Has worked on farms, lamplighting and drove a suction motor for cleaning drains.

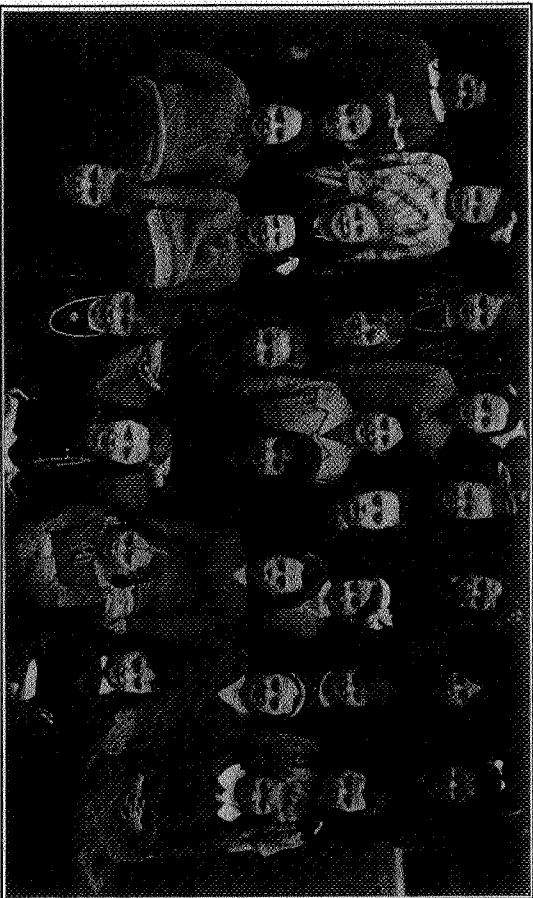
The Monklands Carers Respite Group is run by volunteers: Arthur Gardner, John Kennedy, Frank Bancewicz, Sadie Spiers, Marie McCrone and Margaret Ann Wilson.



*Margaret Biggart: taken in Deveron Street, Coatbridge, c.1950*

This project was run in conjunction with the Monklands Volunteer Bureau through training officer, Rita Brown. The Workers Educational Association tutor, Valentino Bold, collected and edited the reminiscences presented here.

# Growing up



*Dundyan School, Whifflet, c. 1924  
Mary Kane's aunt, Mary Hutton, is in the second row from the top, at the far left.*

The group have happy memories of growing up. Their childhood games included peevers and skipping ropes, with accompanying rhymes. In the summer there was the milk cart coming to cool your feet with icy water. At Christmas there was an apple, and orange, a sixpence and a sugar mouse to look forward to. But they also recall work: from going the messages for a piece and jam to tattie howking in October. Parents were strict with their children when they were growing up.

## A Room And Kitchen

*Margaret M* : We had a room and kitchen. My parents in one room and us in the other. One boy, five girls. The beds were the hole in the wall. They were set-in beds.

*Jessie* : O yon, you had the trouble wi' the boards!

*Margaret M* : In the summertime, you scrubbed the boards o' the set-in beds. You brought the head oot the bed and scrubbed the wood and put them out in the sun to dry.

*Jessie* : It's what they cried the cuddies for holding them up-the boards. That's what we cried them our way.

## Children's Clothes

*Mary M* : We wore usually skirts.

*Margaret M* : And an apron. Long dresses on, long lacing boots. It was black and brown, dark brown or blue.

*Jessie* : You didn't get picking your claes. Your mither picked them fur you.

*Margaret B* : Mind of the Parish? Down by top of South Bridge? They used to give you a line to go tae away out, the Poor House, I think it's a big home now. You'd get a pair of shoes, school shoes. They put three round holes in them, in at the side so's you wouldn't pawn them!

## Made Down Clothes

*Jessie* : If you got an old coat, you took it a' to bits an' took it to a sewer and she made you a rare dress and sewed somethin' for your weans.

*Mary M* : Years ago all our stuff was made down.

*Jessie* : Ma mother used to get an old coat an' I helped her to take it a' to bits. She bought a bit o' floral stuff, or curtains, an' you took it to the wumman an' she made you a dress.

*Mary* : O aye. The wool was good we got years ago.

## Childhood Jobs

*Jessie* : A was washing nappies at ten year old! We had you high wooden chair. Ma father lifted me up on the stool, up the bing, off the barrel. We had to!

*Mary M* : When I was about thirteen we went gatherin' tatties for the farmer, and I went out and shawed turnips; you just pulled the turnips out and you had the knife and shawed it.

*Jessie* : That's right. It was guy cold too.

*Mary M* : As long as it was dry, and we didn't get so much rain then, but cold! O but you had gloves on and you were wrapped up, you didn't mind the cold; it was October. You got tuppence a dreel. It was a great big long dreel, you couldnae see the end of it. It was children that did it.

*Jessie* : You got a pair o' heavy boots and an old pair o' troosers an' you put the socks over the bottom o' the troosers.

*Mary* : Oh yes, cause it was mucky.

*Jessie* : You worked every morning, half past nine or ten to four or five in the afternoon, with a break from twelve to one.

*Mary* : Sometimes they brought a kettle of tea. Sometimes somebody from your own place brought you up sandwiches and a glass o' tea. Not in the likes o' here. Just down in our place where the dreels were. Oh it was hard work, but you had good company and you enjoyed it.

# WORK



*A Carbine Lamp This belonged to Jessie's husband. He bought it about 1937 from the Co-operative for half a crown.*

The group worked in a variety of occupations; most have been employed in at least two different jobs. At the start of their working lives there were a variety of jobs for men locally, in steel works like Sturats and Lloyds, and the brickwork at Gartcosh and Glenboig, as well as the Glenboig Clay Pit. Many of the women married miners, or came from mining families, and remember the men had moleskin trousers and pit boots with steel toe-caps. They also remember their illnesses; bronchitis, or the black lung for instance. For the women in our group, marriage meant an end to wage-earning, at least till the children were grown up.

## First Wages

*Margaret R* : See when you come in, you put your wages on the table, soon as you come in!

*Jessie* : Oor Shona, she started work. I was taking a fiver off her. She was making quite a good wage, and she says "A know where a can get digs for thirty shillings!" "O" a says, "A ken what a'll dae. A'll pack a bag for me and your father, and we'll away!"

## Working On The Farms

*Robert* : A worked with horses on the farms round Ayrshire. There was nae work here in Coatbridge! At that time you were paid by the six month on the farms. They had a

place in Glasgow, Graham Square. You went along and the farmer came up to you, from East Kilbride and a' over! They'd come, "You look aw right"! A went on a farm and A had to stay three year. A didn't get called up because A was on the farm. Eaglesham, Ayrshire, a' ve been awe over! You stayed on the farm, some o' them had a bothy outside, some o' them you stayed in. Livin' in the house was quite nice, but the bothy was awe right. You used to make your own amusement, just the same as in the house, A was on my own though, mainly. A was twenty years in farm service. On the farms a worked wi' horses, you stayed for six months, maybe asked the farmer to keep you on. They still used the horses for the plough, oh aye. A did the potato pickin' too at Davey Brewsters, in Shawhead.

## Lamplighting

*Robert* : A lit the lamps round Mossend. You worked from mornin' to nighttime. Put out the lamps in the mornin' six, then put them on at night. We looked after the lamps, you'd to clean them as well, with a cloth on the end of the pole. If they weren't workin' you had to report it. there was a lot workin' as lamplighter then. A was on mase! You got paid £50 and then there was income tax! You'd work a lot o' hours.

## Working As A Machinist

*Margaret R* : My very first job when a left at school - the day before a was 16 - and a started work the next day! £1.50 was ma first job, 8 o'clock in the mornin' till six at night. Then a worked at Banners, the shirt factory in Airdrie. That was a lot better, we had piece work there. A worked till a had the weans, tight up to the last wean, and

then they sent back for me. We made shirts, some went overseas. They had a factory over there too. Makin' piece work, you've got to make yourself smart. A started off with pyjamas, and shirts, then they got into men's suits. They used nylon mainly and winceyette and yella. Every so often you'd get to buy ones wi' flaws in them. When a had the three boys and ma brothers an' that, it was great to get a cheap one for them! In 1963 we went to New Zealand. A worked there in dressmaking and in Christchurch in a knitwear factory. The ma son was over in Australia! He was getting married, so "Oh come on we'll go to Australia"! A went into another shirt factory in Sydney. That was aw right! Then back home in 1986. A missed ma family.

## Fruit and Veg

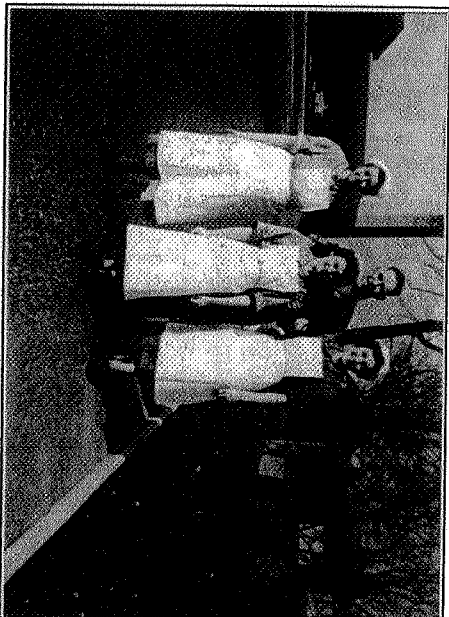
*Nancy* : My father had a fruit and veg cart. he took it jist at Annathill, you know, jist round the way. It was jist himself; he had fruit and vegetables, he grew on his plot. He'd potatoes and carrot and turnip, leek and cabbage. An' oranges, bananas and things like that. He was liked. Right enough he came from Ireland. He wis born in Ireland an' he came over here. There was an awful lot of Irish people came to Scotland for work.

## Working in Woolworths

*Mary H* : I worked in Woolworths before I wis married an' then a went back in after the family were up. It was a really big store then. I mind at the beginning when they opened it, there was nothin' over sixpence. They were very busy. There was a main store sold practically everythin', crockery an' kitchen goods an all that sort o' things. It was a separate till on each counter an' they were high counters too! Ma job was goin' round the counters an' checkin' the money that come off each till, an' that went into the books.



## Nursing



*Esther* : I was in General Nursing. I went into Duke Street to do it. Ye'd to go tae the Royal (Glasgow Royal Infirmary) to have yer lectures, but ye did practical work in Duke Street. then ye went to the Royal to sit yer exam. Then I left there and I went tae British Steel, which I

*Alexander Hospital, 1956. Margaret Biggart is on the far right.*

thought would be good, but I hated it. Ye'd nothin' to do. Ye were sittin' waitin' for somethin' tae happen. I was a 'spare nurse' goin' round all the different works, but it was miserable and, oh it was so lonely! I had tae go tae the Phoenix in Rutherglen, the Imperial in Airdrie, Clydesdale in Mossend, the British, and the Calder in Whifflet, different ones. If anyone was goin' on holiday I'd go round an' do it. There were one or two really bad accidents when I wis up in the Clydesdale, burns an' they sort o' things. If they were really bad, you just did sort of First Aid and sent them straight to hospital. I missed the company of wards. So I decided then to take psychiatric trainin', so I went tae Gartloch

## Working in Rothesay

*Margaret M* : A worked in Rothesay in the boarding house. It was ma uncles. Oh a was there for a couple o' years. A was only left school, fourteen, you worked all year round.

Then they had a shop up the High Street, a was stayin' there, it was still family. The boat went from the Broomielaw. In the boarding house there were seven rooms; there was a lot o' work in it. They had board and everythin'. You got the evenings off. You'd go to the pictures then. There was a picture hall just along the road. It was lonely right enough, but a enjoyed it. There's no' much in it. Well the camps used to be doon there on Ministers Brae away up the High Street. It used to be a 'the labour exchange ones got for a holiday; they all come on down. It was the same sort of people coming back the time a was there. The pay was just like pocket money you know. A was a relation - good pocket money. A left when a just got fed up wi' it. You get that way, a needed a change. It was awfy lonely.

## Domestic Work

*Mary M* : I was housekeeping. You did everything, everything! Cooking, cleaning, everything. There were three priests at the Chapel House. When I was seventeen a went away to America! There was no work here. It was terrible! 1929 I went to America. I went out to an Aunt. She was to get me a job in a shop, but I didn't like the idea. I didn't like America! I was in New York, New Jersey, big deal! I went over in the Caneronian. I came back home in the Transylvanian. I was over there two and a half years, but I came home for a holiday. I went back again. In total I was there five and a half years. I was very homesick, that's why I had to come home. I was in service, well kind of! You just had to learn; but what and experience it was compared to home! The people were very, very nice. They treated me like a lady. A had two different jobs. When I came home for the holiday I went back again, I had another job.



## Working On Railways

*Mary M* : Ma father come over from Ireland when he was a young boy, and he got a job as a railman. He was in the railway till he retired. We were all insured by the railway, we didn't need to worry about the doctor; they paid it as they went along. When I got married a wis insured. A wisn't well for a spell, an' a wis home for quite a while and a had to go to the railway station and get the insurance line.

## Mining Life

*Escher* : I remember well my father's mining days. He worked in Kane's, in Muirkirk. It's closed down now. I was the youngest of five and I remember before the baths went intae the pit. They came home dirty an' they'd to be washed. I used to go down and meet him. I think wi' me bein' the youngest- the rest were at school when I was at home - an' I used to go down an' meet him comin' home, and he would always keep a piece for me in his pit box. I carried his box. He had a carbine lamp in his hat. And this piece aye seemed to taste different from your mother's piece. He always kept me this one, you know. It was a terrible taste, but really, I thought it was lovely!

## In The Pit

*Jessie* : Ma man was in the pit sixty one years, from when he was fourteen. Well, he had his guid days and his bad days, but he loved it. He worked from six o' clock in the mornin' an' he wasnae in till about four. When he started off he got about £2.00 a week. Ma rent was £3.12 a month. A got a new hoosel! You'd go broke. For the rest o' the weans you'd get your family allowance, but you didnae get it for the first lot. You were always waitin' on it comin'! You couldnae wait for it too!

## Mining Accidents

*Mary M* : Comin' out o' the pit they were all black, filthy black. They had to wash when they went home.

*Jessie* : It was a jug. You put it on the floor in the kitchen and boiled the water and you poured it in and you were washing your back! It was yon carbollic soap! They were awe black.

*Mary M* : There was a lot o' accidents in Bedley, and that big accident when they were awe killed in Cardowan. Mine there was a big, big accident over in Moodiesburn. They never opened after that, there was that many killed.

*Margaret M* : it was about 25 years ago. There was one in Greengairs too, in the pit. The were awe buried alive.

That's years ago. There was a lot of people killed.

*Nancy* : Our George was down in that, but he was in a different section; he was all right.

*Jessie* : There was a lot of accidents in the pit. Ma man lost a finger. A boiler run down the hatch, an he was sortin' away doon, an his fingers got jammed. They had to repair it an' he got nothin'. The hatches were for putting the coal in so they could open it and close it again. My son got killed in Nair, ten years ago in June.

## Jeely (Gellignite)

*Mary* : My man worked in the clay pit and they used to use jeely. This woman had a baby and the nurse was in attendin' her and her man had come from where? They were Polish. Her man had been working down from the pit and he brought some of this jeely up. Those men come over from Poland and they had no idea how to use the thing. He was melting it out beside their fire and the nurse was making gruel for the woman and was up. The wee

baby was in their bed, and this exploded and blew the woman's head off! It blew her head off! Her head blew to the back of the bed where the woman was having the baby! That was about 1914.

## The 1926 General Strike

*Mary M* : I think school was on strike! I think it was the 1926 strike. There were strikes in '21 and '26, but '26 everybody was out. The railways were out, the buses were out, the miners were out, everybody was out.

*Jessie* : They got the social security!

*Mary M* : We never got it! My father was working, my father was on the railway and he never got it, but the '26 strike we got it. They told us to bring in the bowl and we got the soup.

*Nancy* : And a slice of bread.

## Housing and Homelife



*A Washboard : Mary Meechan demonstrates her tin wasboard, bought about 1943 for two shillings and eleven pence*

Women had to be good managers of a limited budget at home. Life was particularly hard for widows as there was limited help from the parish, and re-marriage was disapproved of. In the days before washing machines, and convenient ovens, there was a great deal of housework to be done by hand. The range had to black-leaded (a job that took several hours).

## Economising

*Jessie* : Ma man didnae get pocket money cause we couldn't afford it. He got an ounce of tobacco one week, two the next, and worked all his life in the pit; 61 years. A had £4.12 fro a wage and a had six. But a could dae a lot o' bakin', a could knock a meal out o' nothin', a was handy that way.

*Margaret M* : You'd take a jam jar, or medicine bottles. Or your suit the ragman took. Took your old clothes, and you got a penny for a two pound pot. You used to have to go and scrub stairs to get a penny, or a piece and jam. You'd go out and get broken biscuits. You'd wait until the van come in to the bakeries and they'd sell them off cheaper then. You'd get a big pile of ham bits and chipped eggs. They were good. You were glad of it.

## Saving Stamps

*Mary M* : That was another thing, the cards, you got them in the cigarette packets.

*Margaret R* : A saved the Brook Bond stamps.

*Jessie* : You mind o' the black and white stamps? A've still got them!

*May* : A've got a tea set in the house ma granny got wi' the black and white stamps. You got your messages an' you got black and white stamps. In Glasgow, they've got a big warehouse.

*Margaret R* : On the London Road.

*Mary* : Aye, there's a place in Suchiehall Street you could get them too.

*Jessie* : A got ma dressing table!

## Fuel

*Jessie* : Mony's the time there was no money to buy coal. A walkit a mile an' a gathered it off the pit, an' a walkit away wi' it on ma back, a hunner weight o' coal. We were three lassies, an' the other two, they saw the police! They droppit the bags, but a never, an' a run wi' ma bag on ma back, an a hadn't lost it, a carried awe that weight! A never got caught. No! An' they said, come on back for it! An' a gone an' put it on the dyke.

## The Range

*Jessie* : You'd tae dae awe your cookin' on the fire. No cookers, naw!

*May* : We had somethin' like that when we were up at Greenend at the beginning.

*Jessie* : You had awe that to clean!

## Going The Messages

*Mary M* : You'd black-lead it!

*Jessie* : Everything had to be spotless and you'd the kettle goin' on. It took you two hours and a half! You'd have to do inside and out, the whole thing, and the ash pan with the ashes. You'd that to take out!

*Margaret M* : The weans'd go to the shops.

*Mary M* : We'd to go to Coatbridge to do our shoppin'. There was seven of us in our family. There were only vans that came to the end of the road in Glenboig, and you'd to get your groceries. Ma mother used tae get fourteen loaves on a Friday!

*May* : It was a Thursday the vans come round. The weans'd to go. It was a greetin' match, who was to go!

*Jessie* : You'd to get a pound of strawberries for a penny. A worked among them, a penny a pound. We used to go down to an old woman that had a grocer's shop wi' a jeely pan. She took the treacle, it was a big tub wi' a well, an she turned it on an' filled it up. Tupence!

## Food

*Nancy* : There was no freezers then! No fridge! We got wir milk from the farmers. Milk was much better in the cans. The cart used to come round.

*Mary M* : You got fresh milk and fresh butter.

*Jessie* : Soor milk

*May* : You remember puff cracknels we used to get? They were good. Wee round wi' a dent in the middle.

*Jessie* : You used to get a dozen o' they for one and six!

*Margaret R* : Tomatoes are no' the same. The new tatties comin' oot are not the same. Awe no!

*Mary M* : We had stovies, mince and tatties. The Ayrshire potatoes are hopeless now. The manure made things good. I mean this preservative stuff they put in, hopeless!

*Jessie* : They're not the same. You could bile them and have a pound o' potted hough an a bit teal! My mother was a great maker o' jam, we never wanted it.

*Mary M* : Your mother made enough in the jeely pan in the summertime to last all winter.

*Jessie* : That's right, if you got a plate o' stew you didnae get the breed spread, you had to dip it in the way it was.

You wanted a piece, you either got margarine or jam, you didne get baith!

## Home Made Butter

*Nancy* : We had a horse and cart, my father did - you know, in his field, a cow and a horse. We made butter and cheese from the milk, for our own use. My mother had a wee hand-churn - you know to make the butter.

*Jessie* : We used to put it in a syrup. The cream off the milk, it didn't take long if you shook it hard enough.

Mony's the time a stood an' did it. She kept awe the cream off the milk an' put it in a tin.

## Clootie Dumpling

*Mary M* : A special treat was usually a dumpling, clootie dumpling - made in a pillow case. It's made with flour, currants, raisins, syrup, spice - some put syrup in, but I put treacle - and grease, margarine or something. You cook it three hours. My mother used to always cook it and take it out and round the fire. It was cut and you got a piece with butter on the top of it, and we thought this was great. On a Sunday, not every Sunday, just if it was someone's birthday.



4 Generations : Clockwise from top - Mary Kane, Jane Hare, James Kane, Mary Hutton.

## Laundry

*Margaret M* : You would have one on in the morning. Just leave the fire and somebody else would go in and use the hot water. You had your turn.

*Mary M* : Once a week you'd get your special day and go in to do your washing. We had the flat irons. They awe had white shirts, awe flat ironed, the collars.

*Jessie* : Mony's the time a've done that for ma faither an ma brothers. Put them in a wee stack.

*Mary M* : They were starched and attached to the shirts. If they were toffs they had the shirts with the collar attached!

*Jessie* : A knew a woman that her sons and that wore awe these collars. See when they got frayed at the neck? She took a bit off the tail end and binded it on them, and the tail end of the shirt was awfy short!

*Margaret M* : Wi' a thrupenny bit in it.  
*Mary* : In your clootie dumplin', you put the wee china dolls -mind o' them? And a thimble, and a button, and thrupence or sixpence. A button was, you were a bachelor. If somebody got the ring, you were getting married, and the thimble you were a sewer!

*Mary M* : Years back they didnae have that. They just had the sixpence. You rolled it in a bit of greaseproof paper and mixed it in with the dumpling when you were making it. Oh that was a great occasion, if it is was your birthday you got a dumpling made for you. You got the biggest piece of dumpling.

## Clothes

*Jessie* : You mind of the fancy garters you'd get?

*May* : Aye wi' the flowers.

*Mary M* : Oh they sent them to the girls that were getting married.

*Jessie* : And do you mind of the coats you wore? They were away down your heels! They were the latest you could get and the boys would wolf-whistle you. You would go up to them!

*May* : You got the pixie hoods, up at the back!

*Mary M* : Our mothers would sit down at night. Of course there was no T.V., there was nothing. They always sat knitting. It was usually socks and stockings. I was dying to turn the heels of a sock, so my mother showed me how to turn a heel, and I turned it inside out! But I managed it. You make mistakes and you learn from your mistakes.

## Shoemaking

*Mary* : Years ago our father mended our own shoes on the last, and he put the shoe over the last and soled and heeled the shoes. It was very common.

*Jessie* : Ma faither steeped the leather. He bought it an' he steeped it in water awe nicht. Nowadays, you're as cheap buying them! My grandfather could make them, the whole works. Whatever style you wanted, you'd show him a boot an' he'd see what you wanted, and made the lot.

## Lighting

*May* : We had gaslight.

*Jessie* : And the paraffin lamps, you had awe yon to clean before it grew dark. In the miner's houses they turned the lights out at twelve!

## Dry Closets

*Mary M* : We had paraffin lamps and they were lovely too!

*Jessie* : A never liked them, see if you were going to sew?

*Mary M* : Not to sew, no.

*Jessie* : Awe naw! And the gas mantles; if you touched them they broke!

*May* : That's right. Getting gas in made a big difference.

*Jessie* : We had a dry closet outside. There were twelve o' us, twelve people. There were a bit, it was built in like a wall where you dumped your ashes. And a chute, an you sat on it, what you did dropped doon into ashes! An' the men came to empty it, oh what a smell! That was in Ferniegair! Two men came and emptied it. They put it on a cart. They worked in the pits, that was their job tae.

## Housework

*Mary* : The stair was cleaned once a week. Oh it was spotless.

*Jessie* : When you went up the stairs, it was a wee floor and then there were stairs up an' there was a wee toilet, and there was another stair and there was nae lighting, you were shouting "open the door, open the door". Mony a time there were a couple in there courting.

*Margaret M* : You cleaned the stair wi' rubbing stone. It was like a brick. You got it off the ragman. It's like a sandstone.

*Jessie* : And you'd ha' pails o' watter an' pails o' watter an' they were spotless.

*Mary M* : Oh they were spotless too.

*Margaret M* : People were houseproud then.

*Mary M* : Every place was lovely. Friday night was for the stairs. Usually Friday - cleaning for the weekend.

## Fetching Water

*Jessie* : There were a well, one well at the top for the twelve o' us. You carried the water in an enamel pail and you put it on the fire in the kettle. And so much cold water and so much warm water, that's how you got washed. My sister used to go to a wumman, she had a new hoose and we hadnae. Our Chrissie always put a bath, it was too hot for her!

*Mary* : You had your bath in the tub. It was a bit of a job.

*Jessie* : You had to boil the water in kettles and pots. Och!

## Modernisation

*Mary M* : We used to have to go out and carry the water in from the well. There was no wash-house in them days. I lived in Gartcosh at this time. There was a well in the middle of the street and everybody helped with their pail and filled it out this well. There was no water in the house when I first was in Glenboig. I think it was 1927 we got gas in the house. It was all lamps, paraffin lamps. At this time we had the water in the house. My father worked on the railway and it was a railway house and there was water in it. Before that you were in an older house and the pump was outside. You used go to the well.

*Nancy* : Then there was a pump put up after the well, with a tap on it.

*Margaret M* : Mind they used tae get it at the Fountain in Airdrie.

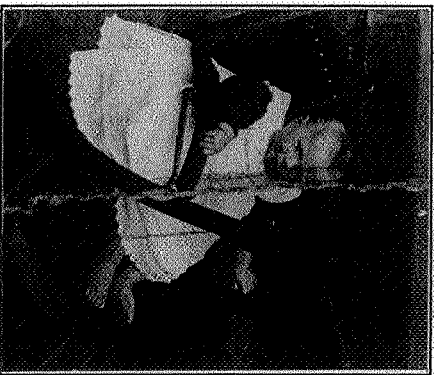
## Prefabs in Glenboig

*Nancy* : A stayed in Bargeddie for a while an' then a went home again tae Glenboig, an' then a went intae the prefabs!

*Mary M* : They were supposed tae last for ten years, but they lasted longer. They didn't have time to build.

*Nancy* : They were lovely houses, and ye had lovely gardens. Ye'd a lovely front and a back, and a back and front door. There were two bedrooms and the kitchens were awfully good. They came with fittings. They came in sections and they would build in the kitchens on the last day. It was on Croftfoot Avenue, the street's away now. There's more houses built there, it's called Marroch now.

# Health & Child Care



*Jessie McMillan as a baby, c. 1916*

Many of the diseases the group recall from their childhood are no longer familiar, such as rickets, scarlet fever, childbed fever. Before the National Health Service, doctors were expensive, and so home remedies flourished. The group have vivid memories of having their babies at home and in hospital, preferring the first to the latter. In their childbearing years men were never present at a birth, although they helped out afterwards with caring for the baby.

## The Fever Hospital

*May* : Up this way we had our own fever hospital, at Coathill, years and years ago.

*Mary M* : You never get in to see them until they're ready to come out. They're in for six weeks usually. There were outbreaks. My mother took ill, and the mother sent for the doctor, and the doctor came and the three o' the family had the scarlet fever. The doctor said, you're likely to have it too, just you go away too, and the whole o' the family were landed in Linkburn. They were isolated. They could maybe see their families. After a time they could get up and see them through the windae.

## Diphtheria

*Esther* : I remember there was an outbreak of diphtheria.

Their throats would swell, their glands, their ears, and they couldnae swallow. They hude't the antibiotics then. I wis quite young at the time an' one o' ma brothers took it. The ambulance was goin' round the roads pickin' them up, it was such an outbreak. Some o' them wur carriers. They were gawn tae the school an' takin' swabs from their throats. The ambulance just lifted them all up! I remember one boy, he was a great football player and they went tae his house and said, "Come on, Tommy, yer goin' tae Kirkwoodside". It wis the hospital. He said "Naw a'm not, a'm playin' football on Saturday"! Ha, but he wis a carrier.

## The Doctor

*Jessie* : You got sixpence a week for the doctor. A took a sixpence off ma man's wages and that covered you. You had awe your medicine and bandages.

*Mary M* : My father worked in the railway and that was all theirs. He didn't have to pay that. Out our way, we'd no chemist shop. You went to the doctor, down to his surgery, and whatever was wrong with you he made up the prescription and he'd give it to you then and there. Dr Clark.

*Jessie* : By the surgery was the shop. You'd get everything you needed there.

*Mary M* : Before the National Health they were frightened to go to hospital because they couldn't afford it.

## Home Remedies

*Jessie* : The weans had the sock and salt.

*Mary M* : They didn't have tae go to the doctors awe the time. They put the sock and salt round your neck. It



worked!

*Jessie* : You used to drip yon mustard against it, as a poultice.

*May* : With a hot flannel. They'd give you cough sweets for the catarrh, it cleared you.

*Margaret M* : See even our men that worked in the pit, they'd bring their piece wi' them! The men used to bring water from the pit.

*Mary M* : Our mothers were all great believers in castor oil. It was a cure for everything.

*Jessie* : A hated it!

*May* : I had it with orange oil, it made it go down easier.

*Mary M* : I didn't mind it. I hated cascara for a sore throat!

*May* : And there was thermogene, it's a kinmina cotton wool for your chest. The smell!

*Mary M* : years ago, the only thing for coughs was a kaolin poultice. They were all the old cures, and they were good cures. For babies, for a bit of colic or anything. Well, I tell you what we used to do, for ma sister anyway. We had a pram, and my sister was bothered wi' her chest. My mother used to put her in the pram and put her up against the fire to help her breathing. The fumes of the fire cleared it.

*May* : If your nose was blocked you used butter, mixed with sugar.

## Preparing For Birth

*May* : You attended classes if you were going to the hospital.

*Mary M* : But not at home.

*May* : At Airdrie House you attended your own doctor, but at Bellshill you attended the clinic. When you come as

## Home Births

well, they showed you the glass case with all the instruments. It was, I wonder what this one's for, and I wonder what that one's for, a big glass case o' them! You were that stupid. It wasn't talked about. No, no. Your mother would have had a fit if you'd asked her anything.

*Mary* : You didn't know until the time arrived.

*Margaret R* : If you said you were pregnant it was a dirty word!

*Margaret R* : It was easier at home. Well, I think so.

When you were at home, you had your own family to look after you, and they'd do anything for you and take part in it all. You'd to book up a midwife.

*May* : Neighbours and that helped out. Oh aye, A had our Allan in the house, on the stairs! A was running down the stairs to get the ambulance and..... He's 33 now, but it's only lately he believed it! He used to think a was kidding him on! They'd a ask about how he was born, an he'd say "don't say that a was born on the stairs at all". It's only lately that he'll believe it! He was right enough!

## The Midwife

*Jessie* : A had two at home, and three at Bellshill. A preferred to have them at home. It was £3 12/- you paid the midwife, that was for a fortnight. It was a lot of money then. She come in every day, and she washed the baby and sorted the bed. It used to be, years ago in my mother time, they took the baby's washing away and they done it, brought it a' back. But that a stopped. She wanted me to take a bath and a dose o' castor oil, and I said to her "A'm no' taking yin. No way. Ye can take it yersel'!"

## Babies in Hospital



*May* : I think you're left more or less on your own in the hospital now. At one time you used to stay in your bed in the hospital. I think now you can get up two hours after it.

*Margaret B* : In the Alexander they're up

after an hour and doing exercises in bed!

*May* : And they just get them a nappy and they just feed the baby when they want it. Just go and get a bottle.

*Rotten Row Maternity Hospital, c. 1973.*  
*Mary Hutton,*  
*May Kane's aunt,*  
*is third from the right.*

*Jessie* : They made you wash the nappies then. And they had to be pure white. ... and boy, wi' five weans in the house, hangin' out the washin' ... that's what they said, my washing was spotless! We washed them in boilin' water.

*Margaret* : And that washing soda, you know!

## Airdrie House

*May* : In Airdrie House you were in bed for 8 days, and then you got up to sit on the side of the bed for your 9th, and then you were up on your 10th day. They were really strict. You had to sit up in bed. See if you didn't... They had the auld wooden chairs. They had one o' these at your back to make you sit up! The food, it was homemade, it was awful! The nappies were all washed by hand. I got on great with the midwife, but she could be a real ogre. Doctors, taxi drivers, they were all terrified of her. You got out at 11 o'clock and see if they came 2 minutes earlier... they got shouted and bawled at, because they were early! See if

they came at 2 minutes past 11, they got shouted at! You'd to sit in the drive till exactly 11 o'clock and they'd to drive up.

## After the Birth

*Margaret M* : After a woman had a baby, they used to put a bolster round her, to get her figure back!

*May* : A bolster in a ship. You would walk round like a mummy

*Margaret R* : I suppose it would have an effect if you had your stays, and your corsets with it!

*May* : In the hospital you had exercises to do.

*Margaret R* : I know in the Alexander you did. Up to the last one a hid, what a carry on!

*May* : They were quite gentle. Just more breathing and that, you know. Then you lay on your stomach for twenty minutes or half an hour or something. You stood on one leg and then you'd to stand on the other!

## Childbed Fever

*May* : You were expected to stay in bed for a month after the birth. They wouldn't allow you to put your hands into cold water if you were a mother, for a while afterwards.

*Margaret R* : It was a case of childbed fever, for what it'd do to the kidneys and so forth. I was told that anyway, but I never knew anybody that had it!

*May* : It was rife years ago, it was serious oh aye.

## Carrying the Baby

*Jessie* : They a' used to stann and blether.

*Mary M* : They carried the baby in a shawl.

*Jessie* : A liked the shawl, A thought it kept the wean warm an' yer back..... yersel.

*May* : You just tucked it in. It come around the back an' around the arm.

*Jessie* : You could just walk round like that, round the house.

*Mary* : That's right, there were very few prams in those days.

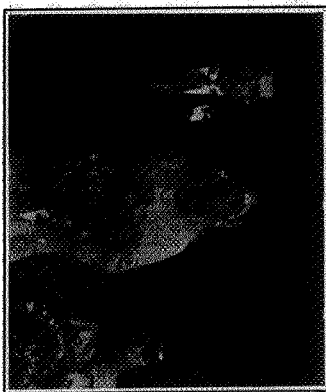
## Caring for Babies

*Margaret R* : See for nappies, if you had an old sheet, you cut them up! Just an old flannel sheet! You rolled babies up in binders. Binders kept the belly button in!

*May* : And barrie coats and gowns. The kids must have been smothered! They were wrapped up in the binder and their feet was at the bottom, and you thingmaed them up!

# Celebrations

*Alex and  
Jessie Reid,  
Margaret  
Biggart's  
uncle and  
aunt,  
married in  
Falkirk c.  
1925.*



In the group, we discussed a variety of public celebrations, such as the Coronation in 1953, when children were given a mug and a shilling. We also considered more personal events like twenty firsts, weddings, christenings and, of course, Hogmanay. The group remember big Hogmanay meals, with the traditional steak pie at twelve.

## Hogmanay

*Mary M* : Around New Year time, Hogmanay, your ashpan was emptied before 12 o'clock. You went out and emptied your ashpan. Your house was spotless before New Year.

*May* : You had a new table cover.

*Jessie* : See all the work! Your spoons and everything had to be spotless! What a cairry on!

*May* : And your jaw box. It's a wee box under your sink.

## Burns Suppers

*Jessie* The Burns Suppers used to be great, oh aye. You got a ticket, it used to be only half a croon. That's when A was young. You used tae look forrard tae it an it wis a good night. It was in a hall, and they sorted aw the tables an you got haggis an dancin and poems. It was good. Ma mother had a bug photae o Rabbie Burns, aw dressed in his finery.

Ma mother used tae dust it. O it was a great big huge thing. A was terrified! It was huge.

*May* : Ma mother-in-law had a great big yin, up at the house. She says, 'Whit's your neighbours?' I says, 'Well, King Billy's on one side and the Pope's on the other'. An she says, 'Well, a'll give you Rabbie, an you can pit him in the middle!'

## Twentyfirsts

*May* : You know how it's eighteenth's now? Then it was mair twentyfirsts. I had a twentyfirst. It was party for family and friends. There was quite a lot of people there. You got things like keys to the door and cards and presents. We had a buffet.

## Engagements

*Jessie* : When they knew they were getting engaged they gave them a present and they put it in their bottom drawer.

*Mary M* : The show of presents was a great thing.

*Margaret M* : It started off with just women, but there were men joined in, the wans that A was at. The men were oot thirselves. They had a stag night.

*Jessie* : At the show of presents they made up sandwiches and drinks. It was a good night.

*May* : They played the records.

*Margaret R* : And took you round the pubs.

*May* : All dressed up, and you had a handful of salt. The chanty with salt in it.

*Mary* : They made a lot of money.

*Jessie* : They used tae have a great time.

*Margaret M* : You got dressed up with streamers and covered up as you can! Some of them like a man!

## Wedding Presents

*Jessie* : Mind yon glittery stuff they put on them!

*Margaret R* : Lurex.

*Margaret M* : The boys used to tie them up to a lamppost!

*Margaret R* : In the house, they put a silver ball up, and you got handin round sweets. At her work, they did her all up for a show of presents too.

*May* : I got a record player, and clocks.

*Margaret R* : We were happy with a pair o dish towels or pillowslips, an iron, something like that. Things for the house.

*May* : China, cutlery, dishes. You used to get the washing basket and the clothes rope, and they wrapped it aw up!

*Cathy* : My granddaughter put on an engagement party and wants pots and everything like that. A says, you'll not get nothing, or a pair of sheets!

*May* : We just got wee things.

*Mary M* : We couldnae afford them.

*Jessie* : They used to give you a wee box wi a lot o messages in it.

*Margaret R* : You'd start it after the honeymoon. Aw things that were usable. We appreciated it.

## Church Weddings

*Mary* : They were nearly all church weddings.

*Margaret M* : We had a double wedding. Airdrie Parish Church. I had a pale blue dress, from a shop.

*Cathy* : I was 21. I had a pale blue costume, a two-piece.

*Margaret R* : I was 18. I had a suit. I was Cathy's bridesmaid! She was mine.

*May* : It was dear getting married, I had white satin shoes to match my dress.

*Jessie* : If you couldnae get the colour of your shoes you bought a pair and got them dyed! Well, A was married in my green and blue, Princess Marina. It was aw the style, it was lovely. A had a wee piller box hat wi the veil. You used to get married in a fur coat and A mind o the pinstripe suits. That was the thing for the weddings.

*May* : And the wee suits, skirt and jacket.

*Mary M* : I was married in white satin. I had two bridesmaids in floral dresses. I was married on the Saturday. On the Sunday the priest got up to give the sermon about the marriage feast at Canaan and he got on about weddings. He said, 'These weddings, they're just like New Year noo. They make a big splash about it.' Me sitting there listening to this! I nearly died! It was a lovely wedding, but it wasn't a big splash! I never got over the big splash of the wedding!

## Wedding Receptions

*Margaret M* : You had about ten or twelve guests. Some had less, some had more.

*Mary M* : Some had over a hundred.

*Cathy* : 160 at mine, in Airdrie! We had something to eat.

*Mary M* : It was usually steak pie, at a wedding.

*May* : It was steak pie, take it or leave it!

*Mary M* : You laid on drinks and you had a big cake.

*May* : One or two or three tiers. Three, I think, was the biggest.

*Cathy* : My mother paid for my wedding. She never said how much it was!

*Margaret R* : You saved up for it.

## The home made wedding dresses

*Jessie* : Oor Mary got merriet 36 year ago, and it was held in a hotel. They aw got two drinks and three course and everything and it was only £7.

*Mary M* : My daughter used to sew, and she made this girl's wedding dress. It wasnae white, it was coloured. And her sister was doing the bridesmaid's, and they went in tae Marks and Spencers and they got a nighdress! It was beautiful too! It was all right down to her toes, lovely.

## Wedding Customs

*Mary M* : A remember my oldest daughter, and when she got married there was the scramble. And it was in the car, and he got aw the money in the car! He forgot to wind down the window!

*Margaret B* : You threw the bouquet over the shoulder when you got married. We didn't have that, we carried prayer books.

*Mary M* : You had something old and something new.

*Cathy* : Some had a wedding breakfast for the family after the wedding.

*May* : They'd get married in the morning, and go back for this wedding breakfast, and then the reception at night. The only time you see your family was at weddings, christenings and funerals!

## Christenings

*Mary M* : a christening was a big thing, mostly. You gave a christening piece. If it was a girl it was to the first boy, and it was a poke wi coppers and a biscuit.

*Margaret R* : With silver in it.

*Mary M* : The children used to stand around waiting for it.

Well I stood for my nephew, and we never saw a soul when we come out the church. We went up the Carver when we saw someone coming up the road.

*May* : there was a tea after it.

*Mary M* : Just a family affair. Something you do.

## Funerals

*Jessie* : There was no cars in those days. They had horses, black horses done up, with plumes!

*Mary M* : Women never went to the graveside, years ago. The women stayed in the house and the men went to the funeral. Most of the men adjourned to the pub, for a drink after the funeral. Women just didn't go, it wasn't the done thing. The women stayed in the house while the men were in the cemetery and would have a cup of tea waiting for the men coming back.

*Margaret R* : They'd sit in the house talking about the things that had happened to them since they were born. Going back aw the years.

*Jessie* : They wore their bowler hats and their brows. You had to wear black, a black bunnet and the men got a hankie.

*Mary M* : You went all in black. I remember the black armbands. Some families mourned for six months.

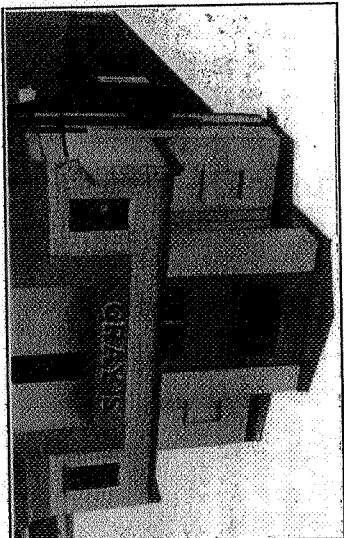
*Margaret R* : Even for a year, some of them.

*May* : I think the war done away with some of that mourning. Because you just didn't have the coupons to do that. People got out the way of doing it.

## A Miner's Funeral

*Jessie* : My son's stone was made in Italy. The miners paid for that. He was buried in Douglas. There were 800 at the funeral, he was that well liked. There were young and old. That's 10 years since that happened. Time rolls on. At a miners' funeral they aw turn up. They came from Ayr, they come from all over, Lanark, Lesmahagow, Woodside, Douglas, there were buses of them, buses. The graveyard was fu with everybody. It wis. He even got a bouquet sent from Australia, and Canada. A thought, it was two boys that had gone, and that's where they went. They didnae forget him.

# Holidays and Going Out



*The Glenboig Cinema (1936-1959)*

The group enjoyed many days out, as well as trips to the cinema and dancing. Until recently, respectable women were not supposed to go into pubs! People made their own entertainment at home with song and music. Places to go out locally included dance halls like the Jinnel, the Rose Hall and The Pie Hall. Cinemas included the Regal and the Odeon. Holidays were unpaid until relatively recently, but the group had many good trips away, often to Rothelay or Millport.

## Treats

*Mary M* : You used tae get mixed spice.

*Jessie* : It used to be tuppence for hot peas, in the cafe.

*Margaret M* : There used to be one at the Fountain in Airdrie, Rossis, and Clairs, and there used to be one under the Bridge, mind it turned into a chip shop?

*Jessie* : Aye, it was tuppence for a bag o chips. An fourpence for a fishsupper.

*Margaret M* : You went an got aw the broken bits! They sell them for a penny, a big bag of them. An there was Biancos up the top of Bridge Street.

## Days Out

*Margaret R* : We used to go for days out at the park at school. We went by burns and things and had races in Airdrie, with the school. Many times we got prizes.

*Mary M* : I remember one of these outings we were at and this was at the David Livingstone place at Blantyre. We'd aw sit in a ring. An this girl from Coatbridge went round us all with the custard cream biscuits, and we thought that was great because you didn't get many cream biscuits then. We were thrilled!

*Margaret R* : They were the best things, you took the weans over to the Lochs, and to the park wi their prams, an their sandwiches an their bottles o water in it, up to the Lochs. There were rowing boats, and the boardwalk. We used to kid on you were at the seaside!

## Millport

*May* : Millport was very quiet at that time. A lot of retired people, very, very quiet. You crossed from Largs. They didn't have shows or picture houses or amusements. You could hire bikes. If you went on holiday to Millport, and you were there for a week or two, that's how you passed your time, cycling. If you didn't have your own you hired it. I never had a bike but my brothers had bikes. I went a motorbike a few times.

*Margaret R* : We used to hire bikes and go runs. One of my pals, her and I was out with white skirts out a parachute, and the wee red jackets, we thought we

were toffs! And we'd hired bikes and her bike got stuck in a tram carrier and she came off and broke her leg, and I got blamed for it!

*Jim Crow, Millport c. 1955, Margaret Biggart*





## Rothesay

*Margaret M* : It was aw on the front. There was only one picture house. In the summertime they had the shows down at the front. Just for kids, the roundabout and that and maybe bingo. Just wee shows.

*Jessie* : It used to be a penny to get on. The kids were gettin rides when it was goin up!

## The Empire Exhibition

*Mary* : We went to the Empire exhibition in 1938, o aye. That was a great thing. It was the other side o Glasgow, was it Bellahouston? It was a big, big place. Years ago, the trancars used to run through here from Airdrie. And you got it from Airdrie to Paisley for a penny.

*May* : The tower, that was the main attraction. Tait's Tower. They were all frae different countries. Each country had it's own stall, aw wi different things, fabrics and wools and aw different things. You could buy things.

*Mary M* : But we didn't have money to buy! My brother played football. And that was the one, the League. And that was the prize. The Empire Exhibition trophy. That's the Trophy. He played for Celtic at that time, and they won that. Frank Murphy, and they won, it wasn't the league. They played off, and Celtic won the Empire Exhibition Trophy. It was a beautiful thing.

## Going out in Glenboig

*Mary M* : They had a picture house in Glenboig, o yes! You took the jeely jar to get in. It was called the Glenboig Cinema.

*Nancy* : It was just a wee old place. No long ago they still had it. They had three changes of pictures in the week.

*Mary M* : That's right. I remember the Tally wi the shop

## Days Out

in Glenboig. He had a wee cart and he used to come to the end of our road with ice cream, old Toby. One day he come wi the ice cream, an my young brother went out with half a crown for a pokey hat, a pokey hat was a cone, same as now. At that time a pokey hat was a ha'penny. He was honest enough: he went in to my mother, gave my mother the pokey hat and he gave her back the half crown. I remember that. We went down to the Tallies and you would sit down an you got pea bray, one between three of you, it came in a cup, and it was peas and juice, vinegar, and a spoon. We had two Tallies, at Glenboig, now there's not any. We had two pubs at Glenboig then: The Big House and the Wee House.

*Jessie* : A bottle o ginger? We got a bottle o watter!

*Mary* : An the way we had oor picnics. We used tae get the lories an the big horses. An we would sit on the lorry an your tinny round your neck! Wi, it wasn't even a ribbon it was a piece of what do you call it, cord or something, we took the ride out to Chaplins farm an we got oot there. An we aw had rings an we had wir timnies an they gave us milk, and buns in it. An we thought this was great. That was our trip, our yearly trip. But we enjoyed it. Trams

*Mary* : The trams went from Airdrie right into Glasgow to Paisley Road West, right to Paisley. I used to go to where my Granmie lived, in Paisley Road West.

*Margaret R* : They were more regular than the buses.

*Margaret M* : We used tae go to Knightswood, one went there.

*Mary M* : It was tuppence ha'penny. A child got for a penny.

*Jessie* : We used tae pay tuppence to go frae here to

Larkha' tae Hamilton.

*May* : At certain times you got for a penny. They were cheaper at the fair, at holidays. At the Glasgow Fair holiday.

*Mary M* : It was a shilling from Glenboig to Glasgow for the train. Glenboig was very popular then. The station's been shut for years.

## ***The Glenboig Charabanc***

*Mary M* : There was no buses at that time. After a while, the charabanc. Mind the Carmichael charabanc? They used to run it from Glenboig to Coatbridge? The big red one? It was like a fancy bus and there was a roof. They put a roof over it, but they'd take it down. Then if it started raining they brought that right over the top.

## ***The Miners' Gala***

*Jessie* : The miners got a week's holiday for the Fair. But they didnae get holiday money. You'd get a ticket, if your father was in the pits. We went to the Edinburgh one tae. There were an awful lot o them, it was a great day. They had a march. You got a great big bag fu wi pie and cakes an biscuits an an ice cream an everybody was there, an cairts an the horses. Aye we enjoyed wirsels. A've seen it ten o'clock at night, they'd aw be going up the road but you wanted in tae your bed and that was you.

## ***After the Dancing***

*Jessie* : You never got your own key! You weren't allowed. Ma mother was awfu fond o her dancin and ma granmie used to wait. The men would come and see my granmie at the windae wi her shawl and the stick in her hand, 'Is your Mary here?' and 'A've no seen her the night' and she'd have got the stick! 19 year auld!

# **Religious Life**

When the group were growing up, most people went to church. At home, mothers taught children to say their 'Our Father'. There was religious education in schools and Sunday Schools. Ministers and priests played an important role, and the church offered a range of social activities too. Today there are a range of denominations locally, including Church of Scotland, Free Church, Catholics and Methodists.

## ***Religious Education***

*Margaret R* : At the Catholic schools, the first thing you come in in the mornin, you'd stand in the corridor, up in the top: prayers. At twelve o'clock you had the Angelus. Four o'clock you got prayers again before you got home. Then, prayers at night, 7 o'clock.

*May* : It wasn't like that in Protestant schools. In the morning we had a prayer. On a Sunday there was Sunday school, and Bible class; it was about an hour.

*Jessie* : You had to go. If you didn't go you got belted!

*Margaret M* : If you didn't go the teacher would pick you up on it.

## ***Keeping the Sabbath***

*Mary M* : Down at our way they were strict about keeping the Sabbath. You daren't go out to play. You daren't go out to play jump ropes. This was at Greenfoot. You weren't allowed out, we had to play inside because it was

Sunday. Nobody at all went out to play on a Sunday. You'd read. You'd to play on your own. The boys played cricket. Girls didnae, they had nobody to play with! My mother used to get eggs from the woman across the road, and she'd give us the eggs, but she wouldn't take the money because it was a Sunday. She took the money the next day!

*Margaret M* : It used to be frowned on to work on a Sunday.

*Jessie* : They widnae hang out a wash. An you widnae hae dared chaup at their door. That was the Sabbath Day. Ma granny never did her knittin on a Sunday!

*Margaret M* : You weren't supposed to sew on a Sunday.

*Jessie* : You got it done on the Saturday and that was you. We were brought up on that.

## Priests and Ministers

*Margaret R* : They came round the hooses in they days.

*Mary* : They were looked up to.

*Margaret R* : At the chapel they used to ask how many weans you had. The priest asked how many weans A had, and a said 3. And he said, why don't you have any more? And a said, A don't intend to have any more, A cannae afford the ones A've got! A told him straight. The priest would more or less tell you.

You had to go or that was it! They used tae visit the houses, just dropped in to see what you were up to, with their wee pokes and everything, you put money in it, hand it in.

*Margaret M* : The minister didnae say that.

*May* : The minister wasn't quite so strict, no. They only came round the house very seldom, maybe once.

*Nancy* : Some of them were awfu strict!

## Interdenominational Services

*Mary M* : The ministers and the priests now are very very friendly. I mean, the likes of the old age pensioners Christmas party. Both of them go, to the top table. No difference made. You know that once a year they have that religious service: one year they have it in the church, the other in the chapel. The Catholics all go to the church, and the Protestants all go to the chapel. And it's year about. It's packed. It's usually about the month of May. It's a special service. It's about 9 or 10 years this started, and it's a lovely service they have too. Just to have everyone together. Catholics and Protestants are more agreeable now.

## The Orange March and the Hibs Walk

*May* : It's in July, on the Saturday nearest to the 12th. It goes different places every year.

*Margaret R* : It starts at the Orange Ha, and walks right round to the Cenotaph in Airdrie. Some o them go to Ireland.

*May* : Sometimes they go to Blantyre and places, round the Lochs.

*Margaret M* : They go up to Coatbridge, Sunnyside.

*Jessie* : There's too much fightin noo. Aye, you took aw they things in good faith. There was a woman in Ferniegair, she came from Ireland. she was a right Catholic. And aw ma life he was Orange. And he'd get the Orange colours and put them on her windowsill! And she says, a know who that is! That's that old get! I'll stop him! But she took it aw in good faith.

*May* : The Black Walk. That's a popular Orange Walk. It goes to Ireland, that's in August I think. They go to Ireland. Aw the different Lodges. On a Friday night the

men go, and they walk on a Saturday.

*Mary M* : It's usually Belfast. Well, I had an old uncle, he played in the Orange Band, and then he played in the Hibs Band!

*Nancy* : Did they know?

*Mary M* : I don't know!

*Nancy* : Where did he come frae?

*Mary M* : He belonged to Gartcosh.

*VB* : What was his name?

*Mary* : Paddy Riley!

## Billy Graham's Visit

*May* : I went the first time Billy Graham came.

*Mary M* : I listened to him this time, I thought he was good.

*Margaret M* : That was in that park, the first time he came.

*May* : That was nearly 30 year ago, the first time he came. Glasgow it was. Kelvin Hall it was. At the end there were hundreds at the exit to get saved and that. I went wi my mother-in-law. It was quite an experience.

## Sunday School Trips

*Jessie* : When the Hebron hall in Larkhall was getting built, a was the first one in it. A was only a lassie, 10 year old. Oh you had to go, and you'd to go for to get the trips!

*Margaret R* : They happened once a year.

*Jessie* : If you attended the Sunday school you got on to the Sunday school trip free.

*Mary M* : And you went away on a cart, a cart and horse.

*Margaret M* : Sometimes you walked.

*Mary M* : We just went round the field, Chapman's field.

You were in the cart, the cart was just done up. We had a horse and cart and you had a tinny round your neck with the ribbon on it. You'd go to Chapman's Farm and you'd to get off and they came round with your tea and a bag of pastries. Do you remember the races wi the prizes? Did you go on the races?

*Jessie* : A used to come home wi ma bag fu! A was in every race. A was a great runner!

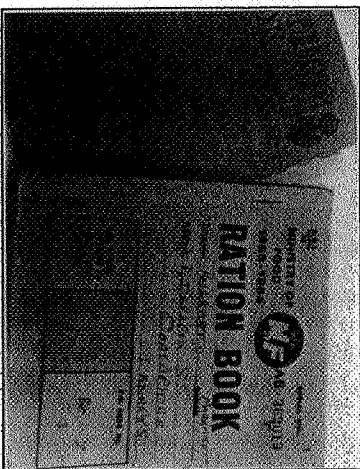
*Margaret R* : You'd get a bit of chocolate or somethin'.

*May* : And the egg and spoon race. And the wheelbarrow.

*Margaret R* : That was Grace's school as well.

*Mary* : The outing was the highlight of your year!

# Wartime



The war meant hard times for the women at home, as well as the men at the front. There was war work to be done, and it was difficult to manage during rationing. After the war was over, life was never the same.

*Ration Books.*

## Wartime Callup

*Jessie* : A got call up papers. That was for munitions.

*Mary M* : I got my call up papers too for munitions. I came home from the Chapel house, from Kilbirnie. They chased me from Kilbirnie back to Glenboig again. They sent me call up papers, and because I had a baby, that was me out. My sister-in-law was sent away to Coventry during the war for munitions.

*Nancy* : A lot of people from Glenboig went to Coventry.

## Being Exempt

*Jessie* : Ma man was excused during the war, as a miner.

*Mary M* : If they were in munitions they were exempt. The farming too.

*Mary M* : A lot of women were working on the farms.

*Robert* : I was exempt because I worked on Brewsters' Farn. Shawhead as well, where the flyover was.

## War Work

*Margaret M* : A worked wi shells in the British. A was inspector. We used different things for the brass bands to see if they were awright, wi a light inside them. They made them in the forge. Then they come to fine them. And anything wrong wi them. You started at the forge and you got told what to do. You got paid out the Post Office. The government paid you one pound five. You got your money off the government. You got your giro, just like a giro. You had to go to the Post Office. We got good money for it 'cause we were the last ones that got the shells. There's a copper band round the shell. They put powder in it but there was nothin' in it when we saw it. We'd just to say there were no defects in the band. It was just the casing. There were three other weemen, we had a place o wir own. They had so many on each side, and they brought them over, bring them in you know, and you went in wi your wee light inside. We did a lot o them in a day. After the war, no work, that was you.

## The Clydebank Bombing

*Mary M* : I was working in the Chapel house down there and it was the Blitz in Clydebank. A was in the house, underneath the house. The Chapel got a direct hit and it went on fire. Then the house took on fire from the Chapel. We had to get out of there and run across the street. There was the shelter across the street and we went intae the shelter. We stayed there until six o'clock in the morning and then the all-clear went and we come out. The place was, the Chapel was. There were fires everywhere. I actually used to say after, I don't know if any of you saw the picture where the place was in fire? In San Francisco? The earthquake? Well that was what Clydebank and the Avenue was like. Fires everywhere. The first thing they got

in Clydebank was Singerses courtyard. They dropped it there and fires was everywhere. So the whole place was lit up. That they see where they were going and what they were doing, the general bombers. Then along the board a bit, in Hargate, there's a big road, called the Boulevard, the other side of Clydebank. Seemingly from the sky it looked like the river Clyde, and they bombed each side at the Boulevard, they'd think they were bombing the place. They knew it was ships up there. There were not so many houses by the Boulevard. It was just a great big road. Aw it was terrible at the time.

## Casualties

*Jessie* : Me and my mother used to get up a 6 o'clock in the mornin' at Ferniegair an we were waiting at them getting ready. We were all makin' teapots o tea an sandwiches for them aw to eat an they were aw, the sodgers loaded in the big crocks to take them away. Ma mother used to make mince and she grated the bread and it was yon jar, the wally jar. She put it in that till it was cooked an she put it in the fire, aw night and sliced it up for their pieces.

*Nancy* : Soldiers were trained at Coatdyke.

*Jessie* : They were all over.

*Margaret* : Up at Coatdyke there were the territorials, they're still there.

*Jessie* : There were one o they boys, we knew him very well and he never come back, he got killed. He sent me a bottle o scent afore he got killt, me an ma sister. He was only a young boy.

*Mary* : I had a cousin an he was in the Air Force. He was a pilot in the air force. After he got trained he came home for his leave. He was in a reconnaissance plane he went round on the coasts, and his plane went out, and he never came back again. It was shot down, he never come back. Lawrence, Lawrence Riley. Never come back.

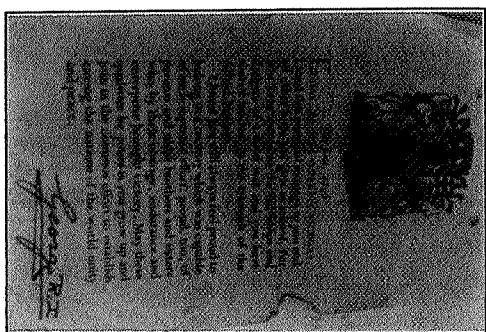
## After the War

*Nancy* : My husband John was in the Navy during the War.

*Mary* : Our Willie wis in the Army.

*Nancy* : When he got demobbed I felt the same as everybody else that'd been a wumman! We had a celebration, jist the idea o them gettin' home it wis. There wis the likes o dancin' an parties an that.

*Mary* : In Glenboig there was a big party at the manse at the end of the war.



*Certificate given to children at the end of World War II*

# Conclusion

We hope this collection of reminiscences has given a flavour at least of experiences among the Coatbridge community. It is only a small sample of the material collected over the course of our project and, we feel, makes an important contribution towards understanding the social history of the Coatbridge area.